

Tree assessment – Gnoll country park foot bridge

Introduction

This assessment relates to the construction of a new footbridge and footpath which will link the country park to the Woodland Trust site at Brynau Wood. The footbridge is 350 metres due east of the visitor centre and the footpath will extend for a distance of 50 metres.

The proposed location of the bridge and footpath will avoid the rooting areas of the established trees and have very little visual impact on the local landscape. The development will require the removal of a line of young trees which have naturally regenerated after the clear felling of the conifer plantation. The original conifers were removed due to a Phytophthora disease infection and a plant health notice which was served on the local authority by Natural Resources Wales.

The trees consist of a mixture of broadleaf and coniferous species which include Birch, Rowan, Western Hemlock and Larch. No management or work of any form has been undertaken on these trees.

Arboricultural impact

The only direct impact on the trees is the requirement to clear a three metre wide strip of land between the footbridge and the Brynau Wood boundary. The location of the footpath is shown on the attached plan as a red line.

Due to their age and size a full BS5837 survey is not required and the impact on the remaining trees root protection areas will be minimal and within the trees tolerance.

Mitigation

The mitigation for the loss of the young trees will involve the management and silvicultural improvement of the two areas adjacent to the footpath. These areas are outlined in blue on the plan and have a combined area of 800 square metres.

The improvement work will involve the following operations.

- The thinning of the existing trees which are adjacent to the new footpath and within the blue outline. This will provide a more even spacing and a sufficient growing area for the remaining individual trees to develop. The trees will be thinned to ensure that the majority of the retained trees will be native broadleaf species with a 75% to 25% broadleaf to conifer ratio.
- The thinning will include the removal of suppressed and low quality trees.
- The control of invasive species such as Rhododendron will involve cutting to near ground level and the annual spraying of all regrowth with an appropriate translocated herbicide such as Roundup. All spraying operations will be undertaken by suitably certificated staff or contractors.
- All tree work operations will be undertaken by suitably certificated and experienced operators using low impact working methods and machinery in accordance with current good practice.

- Due to the restricted working area the majority of the cut material will be removed from site.
- The work will be undertaken to avoid the bird nesting season and any interference or disturbance to protected species.

Conclusion

The construction of this footpath will not require the removal or have an impact on any large or established trees.

If the footbridge and footpath are constructed in the location shown on the attached plan and the above recommendations and guidance are followed the impact on the landscape and adjacent trees will be minimal.

The completion of the mitigation work will improve the quality and form of the remaining trees.

All retained trees must be adequately protected with barrier fencing during all phases of the construction work. Further information on the required protective fencing and correct working practices is available in BS5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction.

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